



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2120		DATE: 2/4/2026
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/4/2026 11:35 PM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

I believe that these Policies are already in place in Our State's 518-Public School Districts.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LIAM NOLAN ROBERTSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2026 1:13 PM	
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I support this bill as I was bullied on the bus in 7th grade.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/4/2026 10:58 PM	

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I oppose this bill as a profound step backward for student safety and equity. While purporting to address bullying, its core mandate—that policies “shall not contain specific lists of protected classes of students”—is a direct attack on vulnerable youth.

This provision effectively prohibits schools from explicitly naming and prioritizing protections for students historically and disproportionately targeted for bullying: LGBTQ+ youth, students of color, students with disabilities, and others. By demanding “equal treatment” in a context of systemic inequality, the bill institutionalizes neglect. It forbids the targeted, evidence-based policies necessary to create true safety for marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the bill’s hostility toward “zero-tolerance” policies, while sometimes valid, is framed here to potentially shield bullies from meaningful accountability, prioritizing a false notion of “neutrality” over victim safety. Coupled with an overbroad immunity clause for school districts, it risks leaving victims without recourse.

True anti-bullying policy must be intersectional and recognize that bullying is not an equal-opportunity offense. It must empower schools to name, confront, and dismantle the specific prejudices that drive harassment. This bill does the opposite, mandating a color-blind, identity-blind approach that will only further harm the most at-risk students. It should be rejected.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KRISTIN T. HILL		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/31/2026 10:08 PM	
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I think most of this would be ok....it's just two things that stand out to me as not ok- 1) that little part about having Principals or Designees be the ones to investigate the alleged incident(s) and 2) Sec. A.2."Bullying" '.....that causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property.....'

Let me go over them one at a time-

1) The part of "...causes a REASONABLE student to fear for....." What is a "REASONABLE STUDENT"....Who gets to decide if the victim is a "Reasonable student"? Their teachers? The principle that only looks at grades? Someone from administration that hasn't had any interaction ever with the victim? It is imperative that any language that can be made into a hard line, is written as a hard line. This should very much say "....that causes ANY OTHER (or ANOTHER) student to fear for THEIR safety (he or she is not inclusive to all. Saying 'their' hurts no one and includes everyone)

What are the qualifying parameters for "SUBSTANTIALLY INTERFERES WITH"? Who gets to decide what "SUBSTANTIAL" is.....This ambiguity leaves too much room for biased outcomes due to outside influences and not facts/evidence. For example, a principal or whoever this "designee" is (also to ambiguous) could already have a bias towards either the victim or the alleged perpetrator; influencing their decision one way or another. The principle could know one of the party's family members well and either like them or dislike them - influencing their decision regarding the student. The principal or designee could be negatively pressed by supervisors and school board members or admins to just quickly handle it and make a 'no evidence found' 'Issue resolved by administration' report.

This is not an acceptable route for parents of children who are experiencing bullying on any level. There are far too many problems (obviously there is enough of a problem to prompt you to make changes) with how bullying incidents are constantly ignored and swept under the rug, or of attempting to gaslight parents and victims into thinking they've blown this way out of proportion and horribly enough, telling the victim and their parents that 'they should just move schools' to get away from it. If you think I've made any of that up on my own, you give me way too much credit AND you are way more out of touch with the actual people that situations and House Bills like this are discussing

2) The definition of "bullying" MUST include "MENTAL HEALTH SAFETY" alongside physical safety and property. Y'all know by now that being mentally bullied is just as damaging to a young person as any other type of bullying and it should never be left out of consideration and should be clearly listed. If you can't handle the fact that the wording should include "their" and "mental health safety"....then

you just don't need to be in your position any longer.

Now..if you've made it this far....congrats. Keep reading.

I will make the rest of this short because, frankly, I am tired and just done with the world for today

I want to offer up a suggestion for the policies that each district/charter school policy should include -- Require each school in each district to have an "Investigate/Intervene/Review" type of committee for every school. This committee would be made up of at least: 1 District Board Member from the boundary that the incident is related to, 2 Members of staff from the school (Principal and...? Maybe teacher that is NOT directly related to students involved), and 2-3 parents/guardians that are parents/guardians within the boundary line of school involved.

That committee can then meet, listen to the reports, statements, etc., deliberate, make a decision. THEN, whatever the outcome, this committee could also recommend what happens from there (while following policy guidelines)- Do they recommend or require either student involved to see the counselor on a set basis (I admit, I do not know the laws on this...if a school can require proof of counseling in order for a student to return to class or finish a suspension, etc.), review if there is anything that can be change regarding the perpetrator's class schedule to minimize contact with victim, make accommodation for perpetrator to be escorted to and from classes.....and maybe a type of intervention plan for the perpetrator....instead of just suspension or expulsion...and actual plan put together to try and get said student more on track to improve and succeed instead of just casting them off completely.

That all being said, of course there should be a line for if the offense moves into criminal offense territory in which Police should be contacted immediately to intervene or investigate.

Ok...hopefully I didn't miss a deadline taking forever to type this.

Thank you for hanging in there til the end!



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LYDIA STEINKOETTER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/31/2026 8:22 PM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/4/2026 10:57 PM	

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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/3/2026 10:11 AM	

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I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to House Bills 1698 and 2120, which are scheduled for hearing consecutively and which repeal and reenact the same statute — section 160.775, RSMo — with only nominal differences.

Single Cross-Bill Objection

House Bills 1698 and 2120 are substantively duplicative legislation. Both bills repeal and reenact the same statutory section, impose nearly identical reporting, investigation, and training requirements, and expand liability protections for school districts and employees — all while failing to address the core problem already documented across Missouri schools: systemic noncompliance with existing antibullying law.

Advancing two near-identical bills in sequence does not strengthen student protections. It fragments accountability and creates legislative noise without substantive reform.

Primary Objection: Enforcement Failure, Not Statutory Absence

Missouri already requires school districts to:

- Maintain antibullying policies
- Investigate reported incidents
- Document outcomes
- Notify parents
- Refer qualifying conduct to appropriate authorities

The failure is not that these duties are undefined.

The failure is that they are not consistently followed, enforced, or audited.

Neither bill introduces:

- Independent enforcement authority
- External reporting mechanisms
- Penalties for districts that suppress or delay investigations
- Transparency requirements beyond internal closed-session review

Repealing and reenacting section 160.775 without enforcement merely resets language while preserving the same institutional failures.

Shared Structural Defects (Both Bills)

Repeal-and-Reenact as a Substitute for Oversight

Both bills rewrite the statute without correcting implementation failures, allowing districts to claim compliance while continuing nonperformance.

Accelerated Reporting Without Institutional Accountability

Shortening employee reporting timelines shifts liability downward while offering no safeguard against administrative inaction or retaliation.

Expanded Immunity Absent Proof of Compliance

Both bills broaden civil immunity and attorney-fee recovery for districts and employees without conditioning that protection on verified compliance with statutory duties.

Closed-Session Oversight Masks Pattern Failures

Monthly reporting to school boards in closed meetings under Chapter 610 provides no public accountability and no corrective enforcement when boards fail to act.

Renaming Without Remedy

Renaming the statute (“Sawyer’s Law” / “Missouri Childhood Hero Act”) has no legal effect where enforcement is absent.

Titles do not protect students; enforcement does.

Legislative Pattern Concern (For the Record)

The simultaneous advancement of HB 1698 and HB 2120 reflects a concerning pattern:

Rewrite the statute.

Rename the statute.

Expand internal procedures.

Increase immunity.

Avoid enforcement.

This approach protects institutions from liability while offering students no additional, enforceable safety guarantees.

House Bills 1698 and 2120 do not fail because they lack good intentions.

They fail because they do not confront the reason the current law does not work.

Until the General Assembly addresses:

enforcement,

transparency,

consequences for noncompliance, and

independent oversight,

repealing and reenacting section 160.775 — once or twice — will not materially improve student safety

Constitutional & Statutory Record Notes

Missouri Constitution, Article III, § 21 — legislation must operate meaningfully, not symbolically.

Missouri Constitution, Article III, § 23 — laws should not obscure responsibility or create illusory remedies.

Section 160.775, RSMo (current) — already mandates antibullying policies and investigations.

Chapter 610, RSMo — closed-session review without external enforcement undermines accountability.



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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: DAVA-LEIGH BRUSH		PHONE NUMBER: 314-600-6018
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI EQUITY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP		TITLE:
ADDRESS: PO BOX 1352		
CITY: ARNOLD		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 63010
EMAIL: dlb@missouriequity.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/4/2026 1:20 PM

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The Missouri Equity Education Partnership supports the idea of this bill, and agrees that bullying is a significant problem. We would like to see some guardrails in this bill. First, we have to acknowledge that without socio-emotional learning in early grades, some students do not know what bullying is. They are navigating socialization, especially at early ages, and learning to reconcile what is acceptable at home with what is acceptable at school. We would encourage adding SEL to the bill to educate children at early ages to help mitigate bullying later. Next we are also concerned about escalating law enforcement without training for teachers, admin...anyone who would make the decision to call it legal harassment. The school to prison pipeline is already a significant issue, so it needs to be handled with great care. Finally, we would also like to see built in training to know when first amendment rights cross a line to bullying. Sincerely held beliefs based on faith or home values do not necessarily excuse behavior. If a student continually uses racial slurs or misgenders students, and whether it escalates to physical results or not, then that should be included in a bullying definition. Words hurt as much, sometimes more, than physical attacks. Faith may be a shield but it shouldn't be a carte blanche for harassing/bullying people. We believe these changes, this bill would be one we could support.